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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the meaning of multicultural education as a means of insuring that students feel comfortable in more than one cultural context. It outlines stages of child development and theories of learning behavior, especially as they relate to the development of cultural and racial attitudes. This paper examines behavioral development in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and discusses cultural biases in curriculum, teaching methods, materials, and educators' assessments. This document also summarizes practical implications, suggesting that teachers do the following: review child development materials; examine all materials for cultural and racial biases and stereotypes; reflect on their own values, stereotypes and prejudices; attempt to accommodate different learning styles and background experiences with a flexible format; incorporate concepts from the child's background in activities; and use props and costumes resembling a variety of cultural environments. This document stresses sensitivity in dealing with multicultural education and ethnic students. It urges teachers to adapt educational materials and curriculum to the individual needs of children and to build on the background experiences of all children in teaching about people of other countries. This paper includes a list of expectations describing characteristics that would be evident in a school in which the staff was aware of the practical implications of multicultural, anti-racist education. This paper also includes a series of questions designed to help teachers formulate a base for understanding the learning needs of children from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds. (TES)

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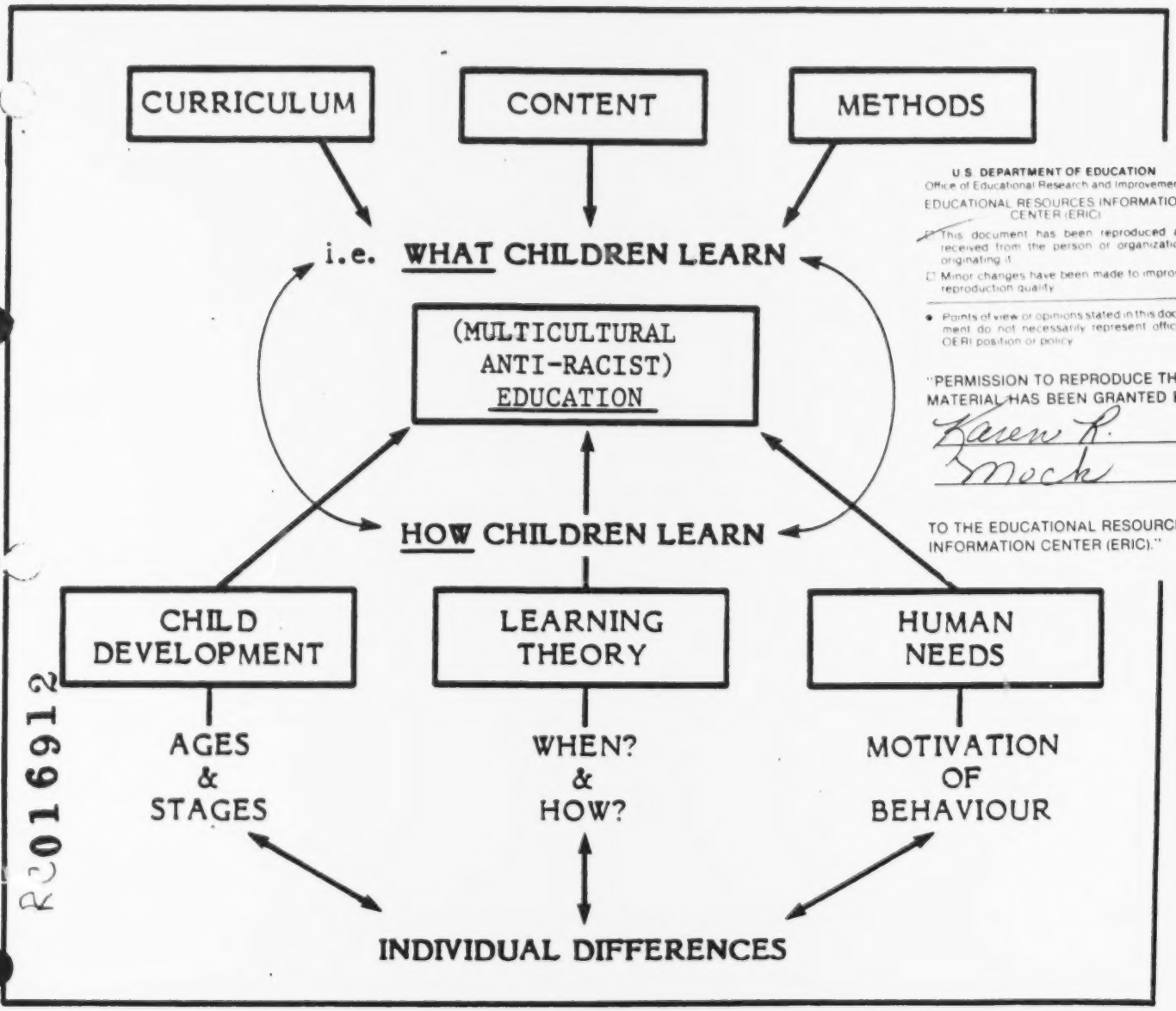
MULTICULTURAL AND ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

The Developmental Rationale and Practical Implications

Karen R. Mock, Ph.D.

What Children Learn is Determined by How Children Learn.



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MULTICULTURAL AND ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION:
The Developmental Rationale

What is meant by the term "multicultural and anti-racist education" and why are they essential in Canadian education today?

Multiculturalism does not mean providing exotic examples of a variety of cultures, but rather ensuring that the young child feels comfortable and can function well in more than one cultural context. In order for a child to feel comfortable and learn effectively, teachers and caregivers must build on what that child knows, not on what he or she does not know. The rationale for multicultural and anti-racist education as early as possible comes from what we know about how young children develop and how they learn most effectively. These concepts are explained and elaborated in two papers entitled "Multicultural Education - a developmental rationale" (Mock, 1981) and "Multicultural Early Childhood Education" (Mock, 1982). These articles provide background reading for the workshop participants and are reproduced for the reader in Appendix A. The participant is advised to read the articles to enhance theoretical understanding of the practical classroom implications of educating children in a multicultural and multiracial society.

The diagram on the previous page presents a model of education to guide discussion of the concept that WHAT children learn is determined by HOW children learn. That is, the actual content or curriculum that a teacher would like the child to learn is presented in activities and through a teacher's styles and techniques. However, just because the same material is presented does not necessarily mean that all the children for whom it is intended will learn the same thing. What a child actually does learn and how that learning effects his or her behaviour varies with the child's stage of development, learning style, and the very real needs that are motivating the child's behaviour at that particular time.

Child Development

Anyone who works with children or, indeed, learners of any age, must be familiar with the ages and stages of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. When activities or learning materials are either above or below the child's appropriate level, problems will usually arise. A bored child is often disruptive in order to put some life into the program and to attract the teacher's attention so that something more interesting will happen. The child for whom the material is too difficult may become very frustrated and behave disruptively, or may become bewildered and withdrawn. In any case, learning does not occur, at least not in the sense the teacher intended. When working with children from a variety of cultural backgrounds, teachers often attribute the children's difficulties to cultural differences. However, the children's reactions are often merely normal behaviours appropriate for the particular developmental stage of the child. Knowledge of developmental stages allows the teacher to plan activities at an appropriate level and to anticipate responses. When the behaviour is not anticipated, the teacher's reaction is often an emotional one, leading to blaming the child, raising voices, and often perpetuating stereotypes and discipline problems. Material that is age-appropriate and that builds on the child's cultural background will be stimulating and motivating from a cognitive perspective, and will thereby enhance learning. These points (with examples) are fully elaborated in the accompanying articles.

Learning Theory

Children learn at a very early age, far earlier than was previously thought to be the case. They pick up values and behaviours from the significant people in their lives, such as parents and teachers, not only through direct instruction, but also through modelling or imitating their behaviour. For that reason, many very young children have well developed prejudices

and stereotypes that they pick up from their surroundings. Kenneth Clarke has described the stages by which children reach racial awareness. (See Figure 2. These are further elaborated in Rosemary Brown's article in the Appendix.) It is important in the school setting to model the kind of accepting, caring behaviour that we would want the children to imitate. Teachers must be very self-aware and tuned in to the way their own prejudices may be affecting their interaction with children and parents. If hugging is your style, are you able to hug all the children in the program with equal abandon, regardless of race? Or do you send different messages to different children about how much they are valued? Notice the difference in the underlying messages of these two comments:

1) He doesn't speak English.
2) He speaks Spanish.

The first statement suggests that the child has a deficit, that he doesn't have something that others have or that you might want him to have. The second statement is worded positively and doesn't imply that anything is 'wrong' with the child, but rather merely different. The second statement does not diminish the child's self concept and does not allow others to feel superior. Even teachers with the best of intentions must monitor their own behaviour very closely to ensure that they are modelling the kind of behaviour they want the children to follow.

Figure 2:

The Development of Racial Attitudes in Children
(after Kenneth Clarke)

There are phases of development of racial attitudes in children:

1. **Racial Awareness**
   - noting that people look different, have a different colour, etc.
   - occurs by age 2 or 2 1/2

2. **Racial Identification**
   - the child recognizes of which group he or she is a member
   - age varies according to the social environment
   - a tense environment may demand early identification

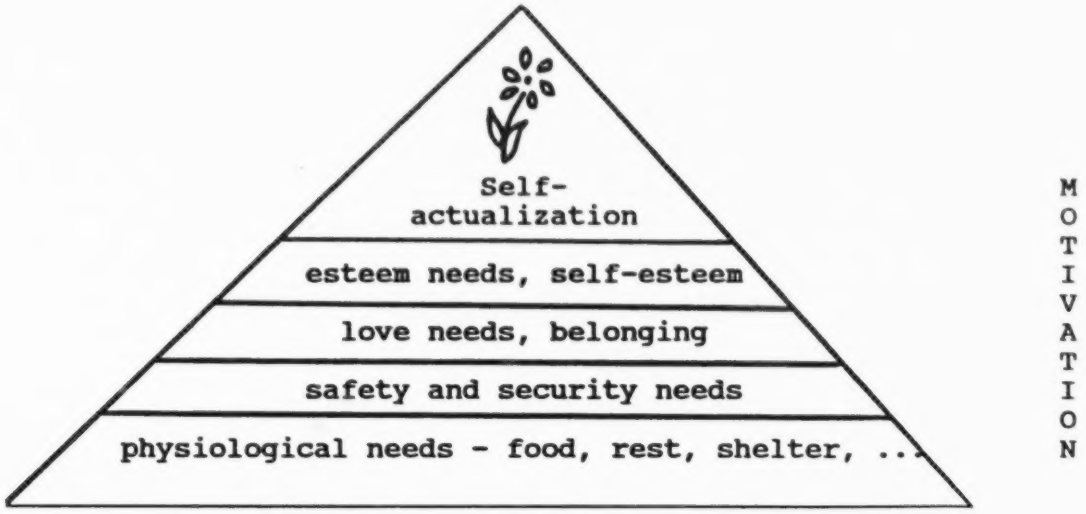
3. **Racial Preference**
   - a recognition that some people are liked better or treated better or are more valued... and a wish to be part of the preferred group
   - importance of life experiences, i.e. parental attitudes, peers, media, school

Racial attitudes are learned not so much by contact with other groups as by contact with the prevailing attitude towards them.

Children's Needs

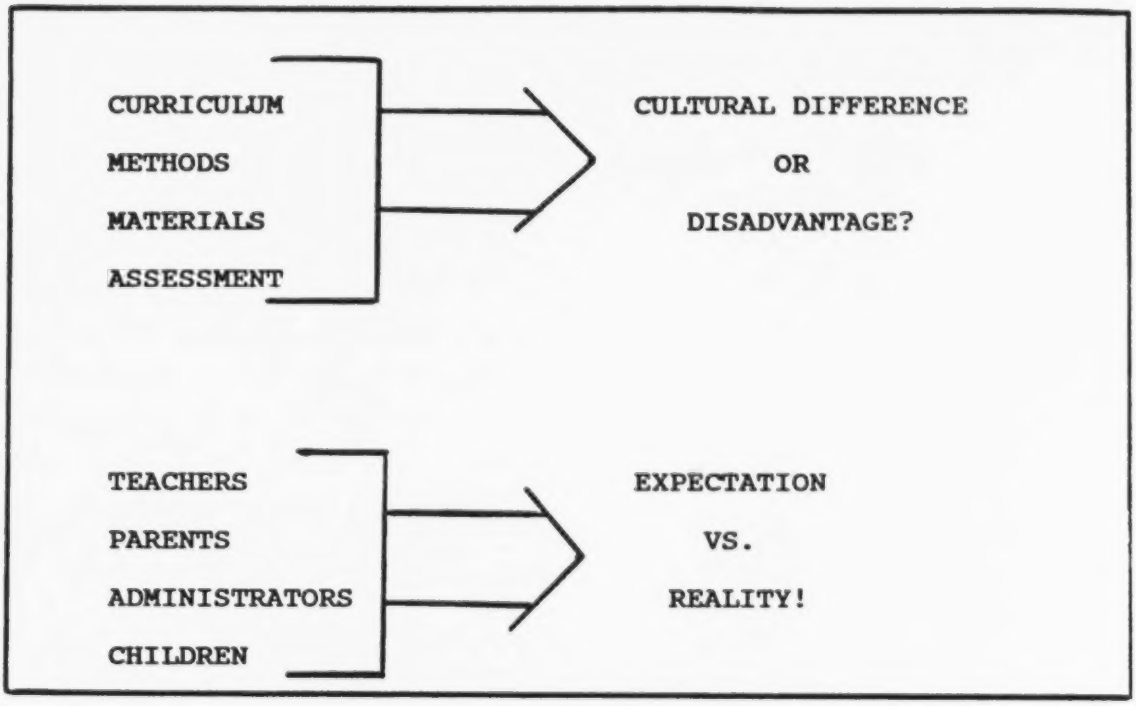
According to Maslow, behaviour is motivated in an attempt to achieve a blocked goal: that is, when one of our basic needs is not met (see Figure 3) we will be motivated to meet that need and will behave in a way designed to do just that. These needs are hierarchically organized, so that a lower need takes precedence over a higher need in the hierarchy. In a supportive environment where one's needs are met, one will be motivated to achieve one's potential. The teacher must develop a sensitivity to determine what need is not being met when a child seems to be behaving inappropriately. The more you know about the child's background and family life, the more readily you will be able to assist the child in a warm, supportive way that will enhance feelings of security, belonging and self-esteem that will facilitate learning. These concepts too are elaborated in the accompanying readings, with appropriate examples.

Figure 3



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

SOURCES OF BIAS IN EDUCATION



At every level of education, there are biases inherent in the curriculum, the methods of instruction, the materials used, and the assessment or evaluation procedures. Biases exist because the curriculum is designed (and the activities implemented) based on a set of expectations for how the teacher should behave and the learner react. The child who does not respond according to expectation is often thought to be 'disadvantaged'. That is, the child is thought to lack or be deficient in the knowledge or skills necessary to succeed in a particular program. When the culture or background experience of the child does not match the culture or implicit expectations of the classroom, it is in the best interests of the child to think of this as a cultural 'difference'. When there is a difference, we can think of modifying the program to meet the needs of the child, rather than thinking in terms of a deficit or disadvantage that would require remediation or modification of the child to fit into the program. If we accept a child-centre approach to learning, then we must be committed to the recognition of individual differences and the

necessity of adapting the curriculum, methods, materials and assessment strategies in the best interests of the child. In order to do this most effectively, the biased expectations of all personnel involved (teachers, parents, administrators, and children) must also be modified so that they more closely match the realities that exist. These points will be elaborated in the Workshops, where strategies are suggested for bringing expectations and realities together.

Biases in Curriculum

Even for very young children, most educational programs presuppose a common background of early experiences, such as fairy tales, songs, finger games, nursery rhymes, and holiday experiences. The sensitive teacher of children in a multicultural classroom recognizes that most activities have an inherent cultural bias, and does not take the backgrounds of the children for granted. It will be necessary to determine what aspects of the particular activity chosen require previous knowledge or experience of the children for effective comprehension, and then to incorporate information or alter the activity to include or build on the backgrounds of all the children. An obvious example of this strategy would be building on various celebrations and family events. For example, almost every culture has a costumed festival (Mardi Gras, Purim, New Year, Carnival, etc.). Using multicultural examples would help a child understand what it means to "dress up" on Halloween if he or she has never experienced that event. Of course a multicultural focus would enrich most curricula and expand the awareness of all children. Learning materials must be used which portray people of a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds (see below).

Biases in Methods

In early childhood and elementary programs today, active learning is stressed, with the children as full participants in the learning process. This philosophy of pedagogy usually

results in the children being expected to participate in a 'hands-on' way in the learning activities, manipulating objects or materials, and 'messing about', having fun while learning. The teacher usually acts a guide or facilitator who allows the children to experiment freely, while relating to them on an informal and very personal level. The philosophy is based on the value of learning through play, in the presence of a warm, caring adult who guides the process by structuring the environment. Many of these learner - centred techniques are recommended and used in intermediate and secondary settings as well.

These currently accepted methods of education are a dramatic contrast to the traditional model of the teacher as lecturer or demonstrator who tells or shows the children exactly how to do what is required, and who expects the same behaviour and the same product from all children. That is, the child-centered methods of education are based on those advocated in modern, western (Western European, Scandinavian and North American) cultures and may be diametrically opposed to the experiences of the children in the group, and certainly very different from the educational experiences and expectations of their parents.

Many educators in multicultural workshops describe incidents of parents running into the classroom and wiping off their children's hands while reprimanding them for getting messy, when in fact the teacher had been encouraging the children to get involved 'up to their elbows' in a creative activity! Such parents are not 'wrong' or misguided' they are merely operating on a different set of assumptions of what constitutes appropriate 'school' behaviour. Similarly, principals may adopt a friendly egalitarian style (or the opposite) which may be unexpected by some children and their families who do not know how to react. Parents may put demands on teachers to stop play, teach reading and math and give more homework, even at the early childhood and primary levels of the system.

Teachers must be aware of the cultural biases in currently used methods and be prepared to modify some of the methods used to match the learning styles of the children in the groups. They must ease them and their parents into the more unfamiliar methods, by providing them with the clearly and simply articulated rationale for using such 'unusual' methods in 'school'. The administration must support these efforts towards effective teacher-parent communication.

Biases in Materials

Just as the curriculum and methodology may contain inherent cultural biases, so are many of the available school materials biased in their content. This applies to both print and non-print materials. Do the books, pictures and posters used in your schools and classrooms reflect a wide variety of cultural and racial groups? Are the characters portrayed in stereotyped roles or are some of the main characters members of minority groups with whom the children (all the children) can identify in a positive way? Do dolls and toys also reflect a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of colour and clothes, without being stereotypes?

Make sure that all children in the program have an equal opportunity to recognize themselves or people like them in the books and opportunity to recognize themselves or people like them in the books and pictures used in the classroom. In an attempt to portray children of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, be sure to avoid stereotypes of children in exotic costumes or remote, 'far away' places; rather ensure that the materials used accurately reflect the children's experiences of every day life. This may require making your own booklets and taking your own pictures, as well as relying on parents and the children themselves as sources of more realistic, non-stereotyped materials. Current commercial catalogues are now often better sources of such visual aids than old teaching picture series with such titles as "Children From Many Lands". To illustrate this point, one such series portrayed Canada with

a stereotyped drawing of two little "Eskimo" children standing outside an igloo with a team of huskies. And while the series entitled "Family Lifestyles in Many Lands" used real photographs, the "Canadian" entry was a picture of cowboy on a bucking bronco at the Calgary Stampede! Each of these entries might have been fine if there were many Canadian scenes depicted. On their own, they perpetuated stereotypes of Canadian culture. It is easy to see that this happens all the time in Canadian classrooms where visual aids "from many lands" are used, although one can more easily recognize such stereotyping and bias when it is your own culture or racial group being misrepresented. Children are less likely to recognize the bias and will, indeed, learn to accept the stereotype as reality.

Biases in Assessment

While principals and teachers are not usually called upon to do formal tests or assessments on children, they do make informal observations that may lead to educational decisions, advice to parents, and even referrals to local agencies and children's services. That is, educators make comparative judgments on children based on their expectations for normative behaviour for a particular age group. These expectations are based on the teacher's own experience and culture, or racial and include expectations for play behaviour, language development, social interaction with peers and adults, adjustments to new situations, and so on. The teacher's expectations may be appropriate for a child from the teacher's own cultural background, but not for a child whose upbringing was very different from what the teacher might expect. Awareness of the cultural and racial biases inherent in our assessment and observation strategies is a step towards ensuring that every child is fairly assessed. Some inquiry into some of the norms of child rearing and behaviour (e.g. body language and non-verbal communication, forms of address, level of independence encouraged, etc.) will greatly facilitate interpretation of the child's behaviour in a more meaningful way than if that child

were merely compared to what the teacher considers to be the norm for a child of the same age. Of course, if the teacher is ever asked to complete a formal assessment, all testing instruments should be examined for cultural biases which could be said to exist if a child from a particular background was at a disadvantage by virtue of his or her culture or language. Some understanding of the dynamics and effects of racism on children will also help make teachers' judgements of behaviour more equitable (see attached articles).

Practical Classroom Implications

If the rationale for multicultural and anti-racist education is to be found in what we know about how children develop and how they learn, the practical implications for educators may be summarized as follows:

- Review concepts of child development and their implications for teaching and learning.

- Incorporate concepts from the child's background in the activities used on a regular basis (e.g. cultural celebrations, festivals).

- Props and costumes should resemble a variety of cultural environments so that all children can find something with which they are familiar (e.g. multiracial dolls, multicultural props in house centre).

- Examine all materials for cultural and racial biases and stereotypes that may exist, and replace with non-stereotyped, realistic materials.

- Reflect on your own values, stereotypes and prejudices and how these might be affecting your interaction with children and parents, as well as your assessments and judgments of the children's behaviour.

- Attempt to accommodate different learning styles and background experiences with a flexible format and varied expectations for different children's behaviour and developmental levels.

- Find out as much as you can about every child's experiences and family situation that would help you understand and meet the child's needs.

- Use the following guide to "Culture and Classroom" to help assess children's needs and thereby plan a more effective program.

The Successful Educator in a Multicultural/Multiracial Society

When one examines a display of books, posters, and colourful paraphernalia usually used in schools and classrooms and depicting children from various cultures, educators must be encouraged to examine the material critically, with a view to evaluating it for stereotypes. Several posters that seem suitable at first are found to contain stereotypes, and it is usually concluded by groups that they should not be used. For example, one poster (in outside a grass hut, the young boy wearing only a loin cloth. To display a picture like that in an attempt to have black children represented, would only perpetuate the negative stereotype of primitive people, and would not provide an image with which any child living in urban Canada could identify. On the contrary, it would be downright embarrassing. Another poster showed a stylized drawing of two little Japanese girls in kimonos. The facial features were somewhat exaggerated in a stereotyped oriental style. These are not images with which Canadian children of Japanese origin

can identify. And even worse, they might draw the conclusion that not only are they not 'good' Canadians (because they don ot see themselves represented in the media, in classrooms and in society at large), but they do not look like the posters they do see of children who look similar to them, so they must not even be 'good' Japanese! Such thinking continually erodes the self-esteem of young children, subtly, unconsciously, insidiously.

The successful multicultural educator is sensitive to stereotypes in both print and non-print media, and ensures that (regardless of the ethnocultural and racial composition of the class) the multicultural, multiracial composition of Canadian society is reflected in the material used in the classroom. Books, pictures, posters, and other visual aids must not depict people of a variety of races and cultures as if they were exotically clothed inhabitants of far away places but rather, must depict a multicultural and multiracial mixture of children doing ordinary, every day things in the Canadian context. This is particularly important when working with very young children who learn best when the material can be related (by themselves or by the teachers) to their own experience.

The successful educator in today's multicultural and multiracial society has an open, flexible outlook, and is committed to the ideal of providing quality education for all children. This requires the flexibility to adapt to the individual needs of children as they arise, and to adapt the curriculum and activities to incorporate and build on the background experiences of all children in the class, not just the ones whose experiences most closely match the teacher's.

The Canadian educator today must not tolerate racist remarks or any behaviour that disparages another human being unjustly, whether the remark is made by a parent, child or colleague. And this educator is willing to take a stand and to take risks in the interest of promoting multiculturalism and racial harmony.

The successful multicultural educator participates in professional development on a regular basis, always seeking new knowledge and skills that can be implemented in the classroom and that can facilitate cross-cultural communication and effective race relations. Those who are most successful stay encouraged by a support system of colleagues and friends with whom to share ideas and concerns.

While further characteristics of the successful educator in a multicultural and multiracial society are described in the attached articles, many have actually been incorporated into the Ministry of Citizenship's evaluation document for preschool supervisors, as described below. They are applicable to all schools and classrooms in Ontario today.

Practical Classroom Implications

The following expectations and competencies have been adapted from the Newcomer Language/Orientation Classes Preschool Supervisor Evaluation Form. They describe several of the characteristics that would be evident in a school in which the staff was aware of the practical implications of multiculturalism and anti-racism for education today.

Principals and teachers today must:

- foster multiculturalism and positive race relations in the program by promoting an awareness of a variety of cultures and races represented in Canada.

- include activities and discussions in the curriculum that promote pride in the children's cultural and racial background.

- promote positive self-image by discussing family members, home, and family traditions.

- invite parents and community members to participate in the program on a regular basis, making whatever contribution they feel comfortable offering (e.g. prepare a special food, teach a simple song, discuss traditional costume or artifacts, or simply assist in the classroom).

- use books and exhibits pictures on the all that depict children and families from a variety of racial and ethnocultural groups, ensuring that all media used do not portray racial or ethnic stereotypes.

- include props and costumes from a variety of cultures in the doll or house centre, as well as multiracial and multicultural dolls.

- include a variety of musical instruments and records of a variety of cultural and linguistic groups.

- choose story and picture books at all levels that have been translated into English from other languages.

- celebrate holidays and festivals that are relevant to children enrolled in the program, building on their diverse experiences.

- implement anti-racist education by handling all racial incidents as they occur, ensuring support for victims, perpetrators, and by-standers.

CULTURE AND CLASSROOM

Proposition: that the school teacher faced with children from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds, formulate a number of key questions as a base for understanding learner needs.

FOR EXAMPLE:

1. The child as individual -
   - What name(s) do parent(s) or guardians wish the child to be known by? How are these names correctly pronounced? Do they have special meanings?
   - What is the extent of socialization at the present time?
   - What independent skills have been developed?
   - What are the immediate learning needs for functioning in the group?

2. The child as member of a family -
   - How secure is the child's family life situation?
   - What relationships exist within the family structure?
   - What is the child's role in the family?
   - Are family cultural traditions maintained?

3. Child's perception of authority patterns -
   - What is the nature of expectations re authority figures?
   - What are the roles ascribed to men and to women within the particular culture?
   - How will a point of contact be made between home and school?

4. Familiarity of child with forms of self-expression -
   - Has the student been allowed to take part in play activities involving physical activities?
   - Have there been opportunities for the development of creativity?
   - Has the student had access to cultural forms which utilize the imagination?
   - Has the cultural group primarily maintained an oral tradition?
   - What are the languages of the home?

5. To what extent are differences in customs and in cultural values likely to affect -
   - development of accepted health standards
   - nutrition requirements
   - co-operative class activities
   - pursuit of self-directed interests
   - non-verbal communication styles?

6. What is the potential within the child's ethnocultural group for using the community as a multicultural resource in school and/or classroom?

(adapted from Mavis Burke, January 1977)